

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1 – 29 (cancelled)

30. (Currently amended) A gelatin-free soft caramel comprising a soft caramel base mass that contains a total of about 0.4 % to about 0.8 % based on the dry weight of the soft caramel base mass of a polysaccharide hydrocolloid which is selected from the group consisting of gum arabic, gellan gum, guar gum, cellulose gum, carob seed gum, tamarind seed gum, tara gum, gum tragacanth, xanthan gum, agar, alginate, carrageenan, konjac, pectin, pullulan, unmodified starch, and a mixture thereof as texturing agent, a crystalline sweetener phase which is isomaltulose, and a noncrystalline sweetener phase which is formed of maltitol syrup or polydextrose or a mixture thereof, wherein the caramel is sucrose-free and gelatin-free, wherein the isomaltulose is the only crystalline sweetener present in the caramel, ~~and wherein said polysaccharide hydrocolloid is the only hydrocolloid present in said caramel.~~

31. (Canceled)

32. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the polysaccharide is a mixture of gum arabic and gellan gum.

33. (Previously Presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 32, where gum arabic and gellan gum are present in a ratio from 5:1 to 15:1.

34. (Canceled)

35. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the noncrystalline sweetener phase of the soft caramel base mass is maltitol syrup.

36. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass comprises one or more intensive sweeteners.

37. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramels as in Claim 36, where the intensive sweetener is selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose.

38. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains 2 to 15% fat.

39. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains at least one emulsifier.

40 - 41. (Canceled)

42. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains one or more natural or synthetic food dyes.

43. (Previously Presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 42, where the food dye is selected from the group consisting of chlorophyll, a chlorophyllin, carmine red, alura red, β -carotene, a riboflavin, an anthocyan, betanine, erythrosine, indigo carmine, tartrazine or titanium dioxide.

44. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains flavorings and flavoring agents.

45. (Previously Presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 44, where the flavorings and flavoring agents are selected from the group consisting of essential oils, synthetic flavorings, fruit essences, eucalyptus, peppermint oil, menthol and acids.

46. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 5 to 14% water.

47. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 46, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 6 to 12% water.

48. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 46, where the soft caramel base mass contains flavorings and flavoring agents; at least one emulsifier; at least one intensive sweetener is selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose; and 2 to 15% fat.

49. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass additionally comprises at least one medicinal active agent.

50. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 49, where the medicinal active agent is selected from the group consisting of dextromethorphan, hexylresorcinol/menthol, phenylpropanolamine, dyclonine, menthol eucalyptus, benzocaine and cetylpyridinium.

51 - 71. (Canceled)

72. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the noncrystalline sweetener phase of the soft caramel base mass is polydextrose.

73. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains a total of 0.4 % to 0.8 % based on the dry weight of the soft caramel base mass of the polysaccharide hydrocolloid.

74. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the non-crystalline sweetener phase of the soft caramel base mass is 23.03 % to 39.05 % based on the dry weight of the soft caramel base mass.

75. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains a total of 0.48 % to 0.53 % based on the dry weight of the soft caramel base mass of the polysaccharide hydrocolloid.

76. (New) A gelatin-free soft caramel comprising a soft caramel base mass that contains a total of 0.4 % to 0.8 % based on the dry weight of the soft caramel base mass of a polysaccharide hydrocolloid which is a mixture of gum arabic and gellan gum in a ratio from 5:1 to 15:1 as texturing agent, a crystalline sweetener phase which is isomaltulose, and a noncrystalline sweetener phase which is formed of maltitol syrup or polydextrose or a mixture thereof, wherein the caramel is sucrose-free and gelatin-free, wherein the isomaltulose is the only crystalline sweetener present in the caramel.

77. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 76, where the soft caramel base mass contains a total of 0.4 % to 0.8 % based on the dry weight of the soft caramel base mass of the polysaccharide hydrocolloid, and wherein the non-crystalline sweetener phase of the soft caramel base mass is 23.03 % to 39.05 % based on the dry weight of the soft caramel base mass.

78. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 77, where the soft caramel base mass comprises 2 to 15% fat, at least one emulsifier, 5 to 14% water, and one or more intensive sweeteners selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose.

79. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 78, where the noncrystalline sweetener phase of the soft caramel base mass is maltitol syrup.

80. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 78, where the noncrystalline sweetener phase of the soft caramel base mass is polydextrose.